

## Patient Information Sheet

# Azathioprine

Azathioprine is a drug that acts to suppress the work of the immune system. It is used mainly in organ transplantation to prevent the body from rejecting the new organ. The drug is also used in patients with lupus who have damage to their kidneys or other organs, muscle inflammation, or advanced arthritis. Azathioprine helps to reduce symptoms and damage to the affected organs. It can also help achieve a remission of the disease.

Another benefit of azathioprine is that it reduces or even eliminates the need for corticosteroid therapy. This means that patients do not have to have the unpleasant side effects that occur with corticosteroids. Immunosuppressives like azathioprine, however, can have their own serious side effects. Your doctor must work closely with you to make sure that the amount of the drug you are taking gives you the benefits you need with as few side effects as possible.

## INSTRUCTIONS

The brand name of your azathioprine is: \_\_\_\_\_

The strength or dose of the azathioprine ordered for you is: \_\_\_\_\_

Take the azathioprine \_\_\_\_\_ time(s) per day.

The best time(s) to take your azathioprine: \_\_\_\_\_

You may take azathioprine with food if stomach upset occurs.

Additional instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

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## POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS

These include stomach upset, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, mouth ulcers, darkened urine, pale stools, jaundice (yellowing of the skin or white portion of the eyes), unusual bleeding or bruising, signs of infection (such as chills, fever, sore throat, or fatigue), and

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## PRECAUTIONS

Do not take more than the recommended dose.

Avoid exposure to infections. Stay away from crowds and people known to have colds, the flu, or other infections.

Do not take this drug with other drugs, including over-the-counter medications, without first checking with your nurse or doctor. Over-the-counter medications are medications that you can buy without a doctor's prescription.

Tell your nurses, doctors, or dentist that you are taking azathioprine for your lupus.

## WARNING!

Use of this drug presents a definite risk to the fetus. Use an effective birth control measure during treatment and for 12 weeks after ending treatment. Azathioprine may pass into breast milk, so consult your doctor before breastfeeding.